VIQI

Variations in Implementation
of Quality Interventions

Protocol for Follow-up Discussions for Screening and Recruitment Activities and Related Materials

The VIQI project team will schedule calls or meetings with Programs[1] and Centers that are interested in participating in the VIQI project and that meet preliminary eligibility requirements for study inclusion. *The VIQI team will work with OPRE to make decisions about whether site visits are feasible/appropriate due to COVID-19. If necessary, all landscaping/recruitment activities for the VIQI project can be accomplished through phone calls, emails and videoconferences.*

During these meetings, the study team will explain what participation in the study would mean, answer questions, and determine interest in participating. The study team will also obtain clarification on information that was gathered during initial screening calls to further explore program and center operations in detail and to discuss plans for potential implementation of the selected interventions, including professional development, research procedures, and roles and responsibilities of programs, centers, and of the study team over the course of the VIQI project.

Documents included in this set of materials:
- A. Email Template to Request Call/Meeting
- B. Email Template to Schedule Follow-Up Call/Meeting
- C. Protocol for Follow-up call/Meetingfor Screening and Recruitment
    - a. Sample Agenda
    - b. Potential Discussion Topics for Follow-up Call/ Meeting
- D. Meeting Powerpoint
- E. Email Templates to Communicate Random Assignment Results (FULL-SCALE)

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[1] "Program" refers to an administrative entity that is affiliated with, operates or oversees one or more centers. A program may be a Head Start grantee or delegate agency or a community-based organization or business that operates one or more child care centers. "Center" is a Head Start or community-based facility that houses Head Start or child care classrooms.

Email Template to Request Follow-up Call/ Meeting for the VIQI Project

Email subject line: Following Up Re: the VIQI Project

Dear _____:

[Placeholder for personalized greeting (e.g., I hope you are well)]. I am writing to follow up on our discussion(s) on [INSERT MOST RECENT DATE] regarding VIQI (Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions: Examining the Quality-Child Outcomes Relationship in Child Care and Early Education) – an important project of the US Department of Health and Human Services. Thank you again for taking the time out of your busy schedule to speak with our study team!

[If at recruitment stage and eligibility is determined, include: "We are excited to inform you that the team has reviewed the information you provided and determined that your organization meets the preliminary eligibility requirements. Based on what we know so far, we think [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] could be a good fit for the VIQI project!"] [*Caveat to add to discussions with all programs:* "The COVID-19 pandemic has affected/continues to affect programs in different ways, so we'd like to continue to discuss/update our understanding about how your operations, structures, and circumstances are being affected in light of this."]

As a next step, we would like to schedule [a follow-up call/meeting] with your organization] to share more information about this important project, learn more about your early care and education program, and answer any questions you might have. We would like an opportunity to talk/meet with you, [insert names and titles or appropriate leadership] and anyone else who should be involved in making a decision to participate in this project.

I will follow up with you by phone in the next week to discuss potential times for this meeting. I am resending a brief overview of our project. I am also attaching a brief summary of the information you gave us during our initial phone call. Would you please review this information before our meeting and confirm if it is correct?

Please let me know if you have any questions. We look forward to talking with you again soon!

Thank you.

Best,

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Email Template for Follow-Up Call/Meeting

Email subject line: Scheduling a Follow-Up Meeting Re VIQI Project

Dear _____:

[Placeholder for personalized greeting (e.g., I hope you are well)]. I am writing to follow up regarding our meeting on [INSERT DATE] about VIQI (Variations in Implementation of Quality Interventions: Examining the Quality-Child Outcomes Relationship in Child Care and Early Education) – a project of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

*[If at recruitment stage and eligibility is determined, include: "*We are excited to inform you that we think [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] could be a good fit for the VIQI project! As we discussed, we would like to schedule a follow-up meeting with you, [insert names and/or titles of appropriate leadership, **including key center leadership/staff**] to continue learning about your organization and the centers you operate, and to discuss potential plans for working together."]

[If COVID-19 pandemic circumstances have not stabilized: "The COVID-19 pandemic has affected/continues to affect programs in different ways, so we'd like to continue to discuss/update our understanding about how your operations, structures, and circumstances are being affected in light of this."]

I will follow up with you by phone/email to discuss potential times for our meeting. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions or additions. We look forward to talking with you again soon.

Thanks very much.

Best,

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Protocol for for Screening and Recruitment

Sample Agenda

Team members will begin by welcoming participants and presenting a PowerPoint describing key details of the study, including goals, timeline and benefits/responsibilities of participation. Team members will then facilitate a discussion to probe key eligibility criteria at the center and classroom levels (see discussion topics listed below) and determine program interest and eligibility.

Sample language for opening/welcome

Thank you for taking the time to meet with our team. Based on what we know so far, we think [INSERT NAME OF PROGRAM/CENTER] could be a good fit for the VIQI Project. We will be using today's meeting to provide more information about the VIQI Project, answer your questions and learn more about your organization. We expect this meeting to take [X] hours. Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Sample agenda items (Facilitators will customize for each meeting)

1. Introductions

2. Review presentation slides and respond to initial questions

   - Project overview and timeline

   - Study goals and design

   - Benefits of participation

   - Roles and responsibilities

3. Follow up with outstanding program and center-level questions that were not covered during Screening Calls (**See Screening Protocol for Phone Calls, Attachment A.2**).

4. Discuss key program, center and classroom information and discuss plans for implementation (**See Potential Discussion Topics for Follow-up Meeting**)

5. Wrap-up: Questions, timetable and next steps

Potential Discussion Topics for Follow-up Calls/Visits

The VIQI team will use this list of potential discussion topics during follow-up calls/meetings to gather information about key eligibility criteria at the program, center, and classroom levels. Facilitators may edit topics discussed and questions asked as needed to continue gathering information that was not already covered in initial phone meetings and to delve more deeply into details at the center/classroom level. Additional questions and prompts (not included in this document) may be asked as non-standardized follow-up and to clarify responses provided by informants.

Participants may include board members, policy council members (for Head Start programs), center administrators, and other appropriate administrative staff.

In most cases, the team will also need to conduct ae second round of meetings to continue to gather information about individual centers and to develop plans for implementation of the intervention components, including coaching and training of teachers. This second round of meetings will also provide an opportunity to meet with as many center-level staff as possible to explain the study, answer questions about participation and build buy-in. To the extent possible, we will try to leverage geographical clustering of programs and to meet with key program and center staff in centralized locations for cost efficiencies.

Note: we will take a flexible approach here in light of COVID-19. We will work with OPRE to make decisions about whether in-person meetings are feasible/appropriate due to COVID-19. If necessary, all landscaping/recruitment activities for the VIQI project will be accomplished through phone calls, emails and videoconferences. In addition, we recognize that many centers/programs may not be operating at capacity. During these calls/meetings, we will gather information about each center's typical operations. If a center is not eligible at that time (for example, due to low enrollment/no classrooms with at least ten children, we will ask if we can follow-up with the center (e.g. in the next month or as appropriate), so that if the environment and circumstances change and they return back to their typical operations in a way that aligns with the study, we can consider them for inclusion in the study.

Program−Level Topics *(For grantee/delegate agencies or organizations that operate multiple child care centers, and independent child care centers[2])*

- **Discuss outstanding Program-level questions that were not covered during Screening Calls and check for any updates/changes to eligibility (See Screening Protocol for Phone Calls, Attachment A.2).**

- **Discuss management information systems (MIS) and data sources that could be used to understand initial levels of quality across centers operated by the Program:**

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[2] In this document, we refer to Head Start grantees, delegate agencies, organizations that operate multiple child care centers, and independent centers as "Programs."

- o What child-level information is tracked (individual characteristics, family characteristics, attendance, assessment information, etc.)? Quality of the data sources? Would it be accessible by project staff?
- o Do programs feed into a central data system or is there an individual system at the program level?
- o How often is the data updated? (Once a year, periodically throughout the year?)
- o Who enters the data?(What role, position?

- **Discuss plans related to the implementation of curricular enhancements including coaching and training:**
  - o Plans for implementation of VIQI coaching model
  - o Plans for implementation of VIQI training for teachers
  - o Qualifications of coaches
  - o Recruitment, hiring, and training of coaches
  - o Technology required for implementation of intervention
  - o Potential barriers to implementing these plans

- **Discuss benefits and responsibilities of participation, and gauge leadership's willingness to work with the VIQI team in participating centers randomly-selected to one of three conditions:**
  - o Implement the selected intervention
  - o Send teachers to free training sessions
  - o Hire and supervise coaches (at Program level) and work with coaches to schedule ongoing coaching sessions with teachers
  - o Ensure that teachers set aside time to meet with their coach and attend trainings as determined by intervention
  - o Facilitate data collection

Center-Level Topics

- **Discuss outstanding center-level questions that were not covered during Screening Calls (see Screening Protocol for Phone Calls, Attachment A.2).**

- **Discuss additional questions regarding staffing practices:**
  - o Supervision of teachers (format, focus and frequency)
  - o Teacher pairings/assignments in 3 and 4-year-old classrooms (generally kept the same each year, rotated every year? How stable are pairings within a year?)
  - o Hiring practices (including documents regarding hiring policies and processes, typical timeline, position requirements)

- **Discuss center-level management information systems:**
  - o   Data systems at the center level
  - o   Data sources and the ways in which those data are used by the center
  - o   What child-level information is tracked (individual characteristics, family characteristics, attendance, assessment information, etc.)? Quality of the data sources? Would it be accessible by project staff?
  - o   Do centers feed into a central data system?
  - o   How often is the data updated? (Once a year, periodically throughout the year?) Who enters the data? What role/position?

Sample language for closing:

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with us. Over the next few months, we will determine which programs and centers are a good fit for inclusion in the study. If your program is chosen (and if you are interested in participating), we will contact you about scheduling a time to come back and talk through next steps. In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact me at [insert contact info].

Facilitators will discuss timeline for next steps, including a process for follow-up if needed.

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Meeting Powerpoint

F. Email Templates to Communicate Random Assignment Results (FULL-SCALE)

Email to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Program-Level Staff

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project for [INSERT GRANTEE/PROGRAM NAME]

Dear _____:

[Placeholder for personalized greeting (e.g., I hope you are well)]. We have news about your centers' status in the VIQI project! As previously discussed, being part of the VIQI project means that each participating center will be randomly assigned to one of two curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual routines and instructional practices. Your results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are made randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of individual centers.

Center	Classroom	VIQI Assignment
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	
Center Name	#1	
	#2	
	#3	

We are in the process of completing an addendum to your Memorandum of Agreement, which will include these VIQI assignments. You should receive that document shortly. We will also send letters informing individual centers of their assignment and will send you a copy of that letter as well.

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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Letter to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Center-Level Administrators

Email subject line: Next Steps on VIQI Project for [CENTER NAME]

Dear _____:

[Placeholder for personalized greeting (e.g., I hope you are well)]. We have news about your center's status in the VIQI project! As previously discussed, being part of the VIQI project means that each participating center will be randomly assigned to one of two curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual routines and instructional practices. Your results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are made randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of individual centers.

Assignment for VIQI: [insert here]

Participating classrooms: [insert here]

We will send letters informing your teachers and assistant teachers of their assignments and send you a copy of the teacher letter.

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you this next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]

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Letter to Communicate Random Assignment Results to Center-Level Teaching Staff

Email subject line: Next Steps for VIQI Project for [CENTER NAME]

Dear _____:

[Placeholder for personalized greeting (e.g., I hope you are well)]. We have news about your center's status in the VIQI project! As previously discussed, being part of the VIQI project means that each participating center will be randomly assigned to one of two curricular approaches or to a "comparison group" that will continue business-as-usual routines and instructional practices. Your results are listed below. As a reminder, assignments are made randomly (like a flip of a coin) and have nothing to do with any characteristics of individual centers.

Random Assignment Status: [insert here]

Participating classrooms: [insert here]

Thank you so much for your assistance during the process! We are looking forward to working with you next year and trust that you will find the VIQI project a worthwhile and rewarding experience to help the early childhood field build knowledge about how to best support young children's learning and development. Please feel free to contact me or [name of liaison] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

NAME
[Insert ops team lead name and contact information here]